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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000178

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: NEW PM POLITICAL ADVISOR LAMENTS WEAK POLITICAL
PARTY LEADERSHIP

Classified By: Classified Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a January 16 meeting, Prime Minister Maliki's new political advisor George Bakoos outlined changes in the PM's office and described the obstacles holding back transfer of provinces to Iraq control (PIC) and cabinet changes: an under-equipped Iraqi military and weak political party leadership. Bio note on Mr. Bakoos is provided at the end. End Summary.

Expanded Political Department

12. (C) George Bakoos explained to poloff that Prime Minister Maliki brought him on board in early January to expand the political department from one to three advisors. In addition to the original political advisor Sadik Riqabi and himself, a third political advisor will be added in the very near future. Mohammed Salman acts as the Deputy Chief of Staff.

Delivery of Military Equipment is Too Slow

13. (C) Bakoos said that transfers of provinces to Iraqi control (PIC) hinged on properly arming and equipping the Iraqi Army. The timeline was dependent on receiving equipment from the U.S., and the PICs could be completed even faster if deliveries were sped up. There is a perception in the PM's office that the U.S. is purposefully delaying re-armament, he explained. "Why do you not trust us?" he asked.

Political Parties Need Discipline

14. (C) Bakoos blamed the delayed cabinet re-shuffling on the political parties. He explained that the Prime Minister cannot just replace a minister, he must choose from candidates submitted by the party blocs (Note: Also, under Iraq's Constitution, the Council of Representatives (CoR) must approve any cabinet dismissal. End note). Although the PM delivered a letter to the party blocs with a deadline for nominations, the deadline passed and the parties are still not providing the PM with nominations, he lamented.

15. (C) In Bakoos's opinion, the inability of the party leaderships to exercise discipline within their own parties is the root of a number of critical obstacles, including the lack of quorum in the CoR and progress on the delayed de-Ba'athification law.

¶6. (C) Bakoos explained that only Iraqis who lived abroad for many years are experienced with how political parties should work. Locals who only knew the Ba'athist regime "were always told what to do and had no experience with strategic thinking." The Ba'ath party was not a political party at all, but "more of a political club, which never required anyone to show any leadership." This is why, for example, members of the PM's own government act more as opposition parties.

U.S. Pressure Needed

¶7. (C) Bakoos said the U.S. should pressure the party leaders to exercise their responsibilities more seriously. Specifically, he would like to see the U.S. pressure parties to provide ministerial nominations and to improve COR attendance. Poloff responded we were also concerned about these issues and regularly bring them up in our meetings with party leaders. Bakoos was unsatisfied: "What else can you do?" he queried.

Bio Note

¶8. (C) George Bakoos immigrated in 1991 to the U.K. where he lived until 2003; he holds British citizenship. He was involved with the Iraqi Reconstruction Development Commission. In June 2003 he joined the Coalition Provisional Authority and worked on Baghdad Governate issues. He helped establish the Baghdad Governing Council and the neighborhood councils. In October 2004 he moved to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a diplomatic counselor. There, by his own

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description, he "worked on American, coalition, and Sunni issues." In summer of 2005 he moved into business and established a trading company, with offices in Baghdad and Amman, to take advantage of the reconstruction. When PM Maliki came to Amman in 2006 to meet with President Bush, Bakoos dropped in for a social call. "Within thirty minutes the Prime Minister asked me to help, and I couldn't say no" he recounted. He began work in the PM's office in early January.
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